

SAMSKRITA

NEED FOR

SELF-RENEWAL

Pr

CONVOCATION ADDRESS

Delivered by

SRI ACHARYA BUDDHARAKKHITA

President, Maha Bodhi Society, Bangalore.

at the

SAMSKRITA VIDWAT CONVOCATION, 1972

held on Saturday, the 25th November 1972

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Esteemed President, Friends and Students,

I deem it an honour to have been invited to deliver the Convocation Address at this year's Samskrita Vidwat Convocation. I must congratulate the Mysore Government for the keen interest they have taken not only in preserving but also developing further the heritage of Samskrita. The teachers and students of the Traditional System of Samskrita education deserve real praise for their dedication to the cause of Samskrit which incidentally is not a very paying one today.

A Heritage

Samskrita is not merely a language, however rich its philology. It represents an infinitely greater plenum of human aspiration and endeavour. As the repository of a rich culture and enduring civilization, Samskrita is a heritage that contains in its bosom a variety of treasures. At the moment, however, the treasure is largely buried. The part that is exposed has to be made socially meaningful in keeping with the spirit of the times. Samskrita needs self-renewal.

"Samskrita", said Jawaharlal Nehru, "is the poetic testament of the genius of a race and a culture and the living

embodiment of the thoughts and fancies that have moulded them.”

Sir William Jones had observed as long ago as 1794, “Sanskrita language whatever be its antiquity is of a wonderful structure, more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin and more exquisitely refined than either.” Other western scholars like Max Muller, Keith, Roth, Bohtlingk and Monier Williams have rendered yeoman service to Sanskrita studies. The Germans in particular have been taking special interest. Every German University practically has had a Sanskrita department where scores of Indians have got themselves trained in the new type of scholarship that now threatens to supercede the traditional method in India.

Via Europe

That with all its efflorescence and the rich luxuriant growth, Sanskrita had to be revived in the land of its origin via Europe is, I think, symptomatic of many things Indian. There are instances of neglect of this kind caused by insularity of outlook in other fields too. For instance, Buddha whom historians like H. G. Wells have characterized as—“The greatest Indian who ever trod upon the earth” was practically forgotten and his teachings which have done so much for Sanskrita were misconstrued and almost banished. This unfortunate loss for India goes unlamented, even though scores of nations all over the world continue to derive all their inspiration from the invaluable Teachings of the Buddha. In twenty five years time, we have had the dubious distinction of banishing Gandhiji as well from our shores. India must learn to revere her heritage and preserve all that is noble and good. Students of

Sanskrita should understand this vital point lest they themselves become victims of discrimination. Unless Sanskritists themselves are broad-minded and forward-looking they can't expect others to treat them and their knowledge with respect.

Uniting Force

A language which formed the matrix of all the Indian languages and the languages of other Asian nations, like Sinhalese spoken in Sri Lanka and Pushto spoken in the Paktoon areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan—once the cradle of Sanskrita and whence hailed Panini, Sanskrita had united India for millenia. It is capable even today of uniting India politically, socially and intellectually if it is made the national language after due modernization and simplification through a process of synthesis with the other classical linguistic currents like Pali and Prakrit, as also with the modern Indian languages derived directly from these classical languages, all together forming the glorious linguistic and traditional confluence of our heritage. And to achieve this distinction Sanskrita needs self-renewal.

It is thus the sacred duty of all lovers of Sanskrita to promote the cause of synthesis, simplification and modernization of Sanskrita more or less on the lines of Hebrew, the state language of Israel, and make Sanskrita the fitting medium both for ordinary day to day conversation as well as for official and modern techno-commercial communications replacing Hindi which is only a regional language deriving all its richness from Sanskrita. For it to become the modern medium, Sanskrita needs self-renewal.

Amalgamation of Studies

There is an in-built conflict in the field of Sanskrita

studies between the traditional and modern methods. The fight is an unequal one, because while one has very little economic prospect and is considered inferior for all its depth of learning and the hardship it calls for, the other with its mercenary approach, having only the pragmatic requirements in view, is lucrative and is considered superior. In the interest of meaningful and realistic education, it is a moot point which method—the traditional or the modern, that has to be encouraged. Both have their advantages and disadvantages. While the Shastric learning could become insular, uncritical and even sectarian, the modern method tends to be mercenary, superficial and not painstaking. In a competitive world, an amalgam of both the methods would seem prudent. If the depth of the traditional learning is coupled with a critical, comparative study, and if the objectivity of the modern method is supported by profundity, then, Samskrita study can indeed become not only comprehensive, but it will also become a pioneer in laying a firm foundation for real education, which should mean the building of character, intellectual acumen and acquisition of skill.

Synthesis of Traditions

After rescuing Samskrita from this dichotomy, the next imperative should be an attempt at bringing about a synthesis with the sister traditions. In the historical evolution of the linguistic traditions of India, Samskrita doubtlessly has played a major role. But it has not moved along happily with its kindred systems like Pali, Ardhamagadhi, Prakrit and Paisaci, to the detriment of all. The Indian linguistic heritage should be like a confluence where many streams and currents mingle in

unison, to create an expanse of beauty. Sam-kritists have sometimes shown chauvinistic traits by dubbing the sister traditions to be the dialects of Samskrita. In a number of Samskrita dramas, dialogues are so manipulated as to make an aristocrat or a cultured person speak in Samskrita while the commoner or the humble folk is made to mouth Pali or Prakrit. This step-motherly treatment of the kindred traditions deprived Samskrita itself much of its glory and richness. The decline of a tradition comes, it must be understood, when it becomes supercilious and exclusive. If Samskrita has to acquire the stature and flexibility of the national language of a modern nation, it has to learn to be catholic and pliant, and assimilate not only the speech forms of the sister traditions but also the magnificent thoughts they express.

Simplification and Modernization

With this synthesis to draw the sap fully from the soil, it will now be necessary to embark upon a determined programme of simplification and modernization of the entire structure. Unless the integrated Samskrita study, brought about by the twin methods already suggested, to wit, integration of the modern and traditional methods and integration of the classical traditions, is simplified and modernized by changing its present forms and by assimilating new ones from as many sources as possible, it can hardly be expected to become a modern medium of communication, much less be socially meaningful in a multi-lingual milieu. This means, again, Samskrita needs self-renewal.

National Language

For Samskrita to achieve its full stature, it should

be made the national language of India. But how can that happen, unless it acquires a reverential approach and a universality as is seen even today in certain countries where Samskrita is genuinely loved like Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Japan, Germany and Tibet. If and when Samskrita does become the national language, what a wonderful unity will it weave ! All the linguistic fanaticism which threatens fragmentation of the country will be a thing of the past. I have no doubt our Zoroastrian, Jewish, Christian and Islamic brothers also will like Samskrita becoming the national language. For, that way these schools of thought will acquire a distinct Indian quality. After all, such a thing has happened in the past. It was by assimilating Dravidian and Munda speech-forms that Samskrita was able to bring about a synthesis of the Aryan, Dravidian and the aboriginal tribes together, giving birth to the present Indian nation.

Secular Achievements

The Samskrita, I am dreaming of should be a veritable garden where a thousand flowers of varied hues and fragrance would constitute the perfect pattern. It is often thought that Samskrita study means the study of the scriptures, and epics only. It should be mentioned that Samskrita is a store-house consisting not only of religious literature but also an abundance of secular literature. A few examples may not be out of place.

The theory of gravity which Newton discovered in the 19th century was known to us even before the birth of Christ, as described in Siddhanta Siromani...

*Ākrishta shaktischa mahitayā yat svastham,
Guru swābhimukham svashaktyā
Ākrishyate tat patatīva bhātī*

‘The earth owing to its force of gravity draws all things towards itself and so things seem to fall toward the earth.

The theory of the circulation of blood which Harvey discovered in the 16th century was already known to Charaka in the 6th century before Christ. Here is the sloka...

*Tena mūlena mahatā
Mahā mūlā matā dasa
Ojavaha sarīrasmim
Viddhamyante samantatah*

‘Ten big ducts connected with their roots, the heart, circulate the blood charged with vitality throughout the entire body.’

Vaccination, another modern discovery is already described in Dhanvantari’s Shakteya Grantha.

*Dhenu sthanya masūriya
Norānascha masūrikā
Tajjalam bāhu mulaccha
Sastrantena grihitavan
Bāhu mulaecha sastrena
Raktotpatti Karenacha
Tajjalam Raktamilitam
Sphotaka jvara sambhavam*

‘Take the serum from the pustules on the teats of the cows or from the arms of men at the end of a knife and introduce on the arm (of the child) caused by scarification with a knife, the serum when mixed with the blood of the child causes fever of small-pox.’

Even Plastic and Rhino-plastic surgery has been described by Ayurveda clearly thus :

*Visleshit āya sthvatha nāsikāya
Vakshyāmi sandhāna vidhim yathavat
Nāśa pramānam pruthaviruhānam
Patram gruhitva tvavalamvya tasya
Tena pramānena hi gandaparsvad
Utkritya baddham tvatha nāsikagram
Vilikhya casu pratisandadhita
Tat sādhu bandhair bhisagapramattah.*

The process of reconstruction of nose is described thus :

‘Now I shall deal with the process of reconstructing a severed nose. First, the herbal leaf, long and broad enough to fully cover a severed part should be gathered; and a patch of living flesh equal in dimension to the leaf should be sliced off from down upwards, from the region of the cheek and after scarifying it with a knife, swiftly adhered to the severed nose; then the cool-headed surgeon should steadily stitch it up and bandage it in a way it looks decent to look at and is perfectly neat. The surgeon should make sure that the adhesion is fully effected, then insert two small pipes into the nose to facilitate respiration,’ etc...

The contribution of Samskrita in the fields of art as well as political and social sciences is equally monumental. Sudraka’s *Mricchakatikā*, Vishākhadatta’s *Mudrārākshasa*, the works of Harsha and Bhavabhuti, are well known instances.

Aswaghosha

Nehru in his ‘Discovery of India’ records that

“Earliest Samskrita plays so far discovered are those of Aswaghosha, a Buddhist monk” and a pioneer Sanskritist, who wrote several classics such as Soundarya-nanda Kavyam, Buddha Caritam, etc. Yet, how come Aswaghosha is not mentioned at all by the Samskritists? Nehru is rightly sarcastic when he says “Fragments of Aswaghosha’s manuscripts were discovered strangely enough at Turfan on the borders of the Gobi desert !”

Kalidasa

Again, it is a Western scholar, Sylvan Levi, who had to throw light on the fascinating perspective of Samskrita drama. Kalidasa is acknowledged to be the greatest poet and dramatist. The American Indologist Rider in his splendid tribute says, “Kalidasa understood in the 5th century what Europe did not learn until the 19th, and even now comprehends only imperfectly that the world was not made for man, that man reaches his full stature only as he realises the dignity and worth of life.”

Dhammapada

It will not be out of place if one were to cite a few quotations from the Pali and Samskrita work, the Dhammapada, to show the affinity of both the traditions and to prove the contention that all the classical traditions of India could be integrated on the basis of existing literature.

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| 1. <i>Sarva pāpasya akaraṇam</i> | <i>Sabbapāpassa akaranam,</i> |
| <i>Kushalasya upasampada</i> | <i>Kusalassa upasampadā</i> |
| <i>Swachitta pariyodāpanam</i> | <i>Sacittapariyodapanam</i> |
| <i>Etath Buddhānushāsanam</i> | <i>Etam Bdddhānusāsanam</i> |

To avoid all evil,
To cultivate the good,
To cleanse one’s mind,
This is the Teaching of all the Buddhas.

2. *Kshānti paramam tapastitikshāh
Nirvānam paramam vadanti Buddhāh;
nahi pravrajitah paropaghāti,
shramano bhavati paravivahethayānah*

*Khanti paramam tapo titikkhā
nibbānam paramam vadanti Buddha:
na hi pabbajito parāpaghati,
samano hoti param vihetthayanto.*

Enduring patience is the highest austerity,
'Nibbāna' is Supreme so the Buddhas say,
Verily, he is not a monk who harms another,
Nor is he a recluse who oppresses others.

3. *Na paresham vilomāni, Na paresam vilomāni
Na paresham krutākṛutam na paresam katākatam
Ātmanantu sameekshita attano va avekkheyya
Samāni vishamānicha katāni akatāni ca.*

Let none find faults in others.

Let none see omissions and commissions in others.

But let one see one's own acts done and undone.

4. *Kāyena sanvarah sādhu,
Sādhu vāchātha sanvarah,
Manasā sanvarah sādhu,
Sādhu sarvatra samvarah;
Sarvatra sanvrito bhukshuh
Sarvadukkhāt pramucyate.*

*Kāyena samvaro sādhu,
sādhu vācāya samvaro,
manasā samvaro sādhu,
sādhu sabbattha samvaro;
sabbattha samvuto bhikkhu
sabbadukkhā pamucceati.*

Good is restraint in action :
Good is restraint in speech ;
Good is restraint in thought ;
Restraint everywhere is good.
The monk restrained everywhere
Is freed from all suffering.

5. *Na munda bhāvo, na jata, na panko*
Nanasanam thandila shayikāva
Rajojalam vonkutukaprahānam
Dukkhaḥ pramokṣaṁ nahitena bhoṭi

Na naggacariyā na jata na panko
nanāsaṅka thandilasāyika va
rajo ca jallam ukkutikappadhānam
sodhenti maccaṁ avitinnakankham.

Not going about naked, not matted locks, not filth, not fasting, not lying on the ground, not smearing oneself with ashes and dust, not sitting on the heels (in penance), can purify a mortal who has not overcome cynicism.

6. *Alankruto vāpi chareyya dharmam*
Kṣānto, dānto, niyato brahmachārī
Sarvehi bhutehi nivāryadantaṁ
So brāhmaṇo, sa śramaṇo, sa Bhikṣuḥ

Alankato cepi samam careyya
santo danto niyato brahmachārī
sabbesu bhutesu nidhāya dantaṁ
so brahmaṇo, so samaṇo, sa bhikkhu.

Even though he be gaily decked but if he is poised, if he is calm, is controlled and established in holy life, having laid aside the cudgel against all beings—he truly, is a holy man, a recluse, a Bhikkhu (monk).

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| 7. <i>Sahasramapi vachānām</i> | <i>Sahassam api vācā</i> |
| <i>Anartha padasamhitā</i> | <i>anatthapadasamhitā</i> |
| <i>Ekas arthavathī sreya</i> | <i>ekam atthapadam seyyo</i> |
| <i>Yamshrutvā upasamyati</i> | <i>yam sutvā upasammati.</i> |

Better than a thousand useless words, is one useful word hearing which one attains peace.

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| 8. <i>Yoshatāni sahasrānam</i> | <i>Yo sahasam sahassera</i> |
| <i>Sangrāme manujā jaye</i> | <i>sangāme mānuse jine</i> |
| <i>Yochaikam jaye ātmānam</i> | <i>ekan ca jeyya attānam</i> |
| <i>Savai sangrāmajit varah</i> | <i>sa ve sangāmajuttamo.</i> |

Though he may conquer a thousand times, a thousand men in battle, yet he indeed is the noblest victor who would conquer himself.

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| 9. <i>Yocha varsha shatam jive</i> | <i>Yo ca vassasatam jive</i> |
| <i>Apashyam amrutam padam</i> | <i>apassam amatam padam</i> |
| <i>Ekāham jīvitam shream</i> | <i>ekāham jīvitam seyyo</i> |
| <i>Pashyato amrutam padam</i> | <i>passato amatam padam.</i> |

Better it is to live one day, seeing the Deathless (i. e., Nibbana) than a hundred years, without ever seeing the Deathless.

Sanskrita doubtlessly has the elasticity and richness whereby it can express the most modern of thoughts whether in the field of science or technology, medicine, art or philosophy. Yet the pity is very few think of rendering modern works into Sanskrita and bend it in a way as to be an easy contemporary mode of communication.

I am told that there is a Sanskrita Commission which awards meagre grants to some schools and institutions. By doling out small sums, Sanskrita can never be resuscitated. The Government should think of more

pragmatic and vigorous programmes to reactivate Samskrita studies. I suggest that on the lines of the Akademies, like the Sangeet, Natak, and Lalit Kala which receive colossal sums for causes much limited, an Academy for Integrated Samskrita Development be established with substantial sums for variegated and intensive programmes of development.

In the interest of development of Samskrita it is imperative that lovers of Samskrita should recapture the old spirit of assimilating expressions from all modern languages, in the manner of English. If Samskrita has to become the cementing force for the unity of India, there is no other alternative. Let Samskrita be freed from becoming the close preserve of a restricted group of people. Investments grow only when re-invested and Samskrita will grow when it assimilates and thereby becomes the matrix of all Indian languages. You can never preserve Samskrita, much less develop, if you turn it into a close preserve. The spirit of the time and the spirit of tradition must be integrated. Let everybody speak Samskrita, read Samskrita, write Samskrita and dream in Samskrita, be habituated to Samskrita and thus rehabilitate Samskrita, make it the common idiom of India. And to do that Samskrita needs self-renewal.

In conclusion I would like to suggest these four measures to be undertaken in right earnest by all concerned, the governmental as well as voluntary institutions :

1. Translation of modern works in all subjects into Samskrita ;
2. Practical measures to integrate the classical tradi-

tion of Sanskrit, Pali, Ardhamagadi and Prakrit into one integrated structure of study and communication ;

3. Practical measures to simplify and modernise this integrated structure ; and

4. Appropriate legislative action to turn this integrated and modernised classical medium into a national language.

I pray from the core of my heart that may the Grace of Lord Buddha and all the Devas, all the Saints and Sages, all the Prophets and Messiahs, be with you all. May you all be happy.

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